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THE  
INNOCENCY  
OF  
ERROR,  
ASSERTED and VINDICATED.

In a LETTER to -----

By EUGENIUS PHILALETHERS. Dr Sykes  
*Arthur Ashley Sykes*

The Second Edition, Corrected.

WITH  
A PREFACE in Answer to the  
REMARKS, &c. lately made upon it.

*If there be any who call themselves Protestants, who affect a Dominion over the Minds and Consciences of Men, — who wou'd debar Men of the use of their own Understandings, — who will not allow Men to think honestly, that do not think just as they themselves do, and wou'd be for persecuting Men for Conscience sake; all I can say of such Persons, is, That they seem not to know what spirit they are of, and are so far Popish in the Protestant Profession.*

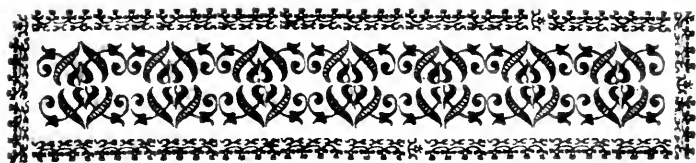
Dr. Sydal's Sermon at Tunbridge, Aug. 14. 1715. p. 22.

L O N D O N:

Printed for JOHN WYAT, at the Rose in  
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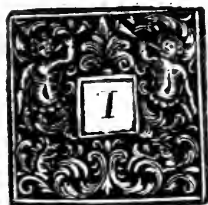
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# THE P R E F A C E :

In *A N S W E R* to a Pamphlet  
Intituled [*R E M A R K S* upon, &c.]



*THE Impression of the INNOCENCY OF ERROR being Sold off, I thought it not improper, upon Re-printing it, to take some notice of the Remarks, &c. lately made upon it. My Design in That, was to shew, how Innocent a thing it was to be Mistaken in any Matter, where Industry and Honesty, Diligence and Sincerity had been applied to find out Truth: That God wou'd never Punish a Man for his Involuntary Errors, if he had been sincere in his Searches after the Divine Will: And, That no such Errors were Criminal.*

*All this the Remarker grants me, in several Places; and denies it again, or wou'd seem to do it, in so many more, without giving any Reason; that I cannot but be surpriz'd at his Conduct. To shew you this a little particularly: p. 17. he says, Where we cannot but err, where our Mistake is unavoidable, there we need fear no Punishment for missing the Truth. Again, p. 33. All I believe will readily grant, that when Religious Truth lies out of our way, or when in our way, we are unable to discern it, our Case is very safe, if we live up to*

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what we know. *Again, p. 45.* Every one knows, *who considers things rightly, that Errors even in Religion are not punishable, quatenus Errors :* That the Evil, strictly speaking, lies not in them, but in that peculiar Frame and Disposition of Mind which tends to betray Men into them.

*Who wou'd imagine, that after such Concessions of the Thing I plead for, every Argument I urge should be oppos'd with the Zeal of an Adversary contending pro Aris & Focis? I am represented as endeavouring, p. 1. to shew that we are at liberty to think as we please in Religion ; to believe or disbelieve, ad libitum, any Article. That I appear in Vindication of Error, ibid. And therefore, p. 28. I am call'd the Patron of Error ; p. 36. Advocate of Error ; and elsewhere invidious Reflections are cast upon me with equal Plenty and Injustice. Is this Management to be justified by the Figure call'd Nonsense, a witty Compliment paid to me, p. 27. or is it not rather by a Reality call'd Dishonesty? What? Is there no difference between shewing the Innocency of Simple and Involuntary Error, and being the Patron or Advocate of Error? Are these Propositions the same, A Man may not be liable to Punishment for Error, when he sincerely searches for, but cannot find Truth ; And, A Man may believe or disbelieve, ad libitum, any Article? But to pass by this.*

*I defin'd Religion, An Habitual Disposition of the Mind to Worship and to Please God. This Definition the Remarker begs leave to pronounce Lane and Imperfect. I add therefore, says he, as an Essential to true Religion, That it must be the Worshipping of God after the Way or Manner that He has prescribed ; or as to the Circumstantials of it, left to the Governors of his Church to determine, p. 8. It seems I omitted this latter and requisite part, ibid. Crime enough against the Men of our Remarker's Temper, Zeal, and Principle, to omit the Circumstantials of Religion, which are not Religion itself, in telling you what Religion is. The Circumstantials of Religion seem to me such as Religion may be without ; Essentials of Religion, such as it cannot*  
be



*be without : yet our Author makes Circumstantials to be Essentials of Religion. A clear way of shewing my Definition lame and Imperfect !*

*To proceed now to the Arguments I urg'd to shew the Innocency of Error. The*

*First was, That our Perceptions of Things being in numberless Instances quite different from what Things are in themselves, unless we are capable of bringing together, and comparing a great many intermediate Ideas to prove the contrary, we must necessarily be under abundance of Errors. What Reply is made to this ? Why, p. 13. he says, 'Tis granted\*indeed, That we may think we perceive a thing, when really we do not : And the Will ever conforming to what we take to be the present Dictate of the Understanding, we unavoidably err. This, one wou'd think, was saying what I had said, and granting me my Argument. But presently afterwards he tells us, Our Will all the while is in the fault, by Assenting, without real Evidence, p. 13. And p. 14. 'Tis through Precipitancy in Judging before we Perceive, — that we are betrayed into innumerable Errors ; whereof the far greatest part may be innocent, upon account of the Indifferency of the Matters they relate to. Here he allows a great many Errors to be innocent. But for fear he shou'd be reckon'd an Advocate of Error, he retracts this in the next Words, Yet considering their Root, they are not wholly Unculpable. The far greatest part may be Innocent, yet not wholly Unculpable, is the same, I take it, as to say, They may be innocently Criminal ; which looks like an Absurdity. The next Words are, As Error never lies in our Perceptions, properly speaking, so neither doth it necessarily arise therefrom. In the preceding Page, he told us, 'Tis granted that we may think we perceive a thing, when really we do not ; and the Will ever conforming to what we take to be the present Dictate of the Understanding, we unavoidably err. So then Error doth not necessarily arise from our Perceptions, but yet we unavoidably, i. e. necessarily err. What Doubting, Shifting Arts are these ?*

*He agrees with me, p. 17. That Error, as such, is not Criminal. He goes on, There are some Errors which carry in them a great Malignancy, and are never-failing Symptoms of a Mind much distemper'd, — disdaining to admit any Proposition as true, unless it can grasp and comprehend it, tho' Truth it self and Unerring Wisdom have vouch'd it. Errors of this nature, Our Author (meaning me) may bring within the compass of simple ones, but they are too monstrous to be brought within the Bounds of Innocency. The Innocency of Involuntary Errors I have pleaded, and still do plead for : But 'tis so black an Insinuation, that I vindicate Errors which carry in them a great Malignancy, or the Errors of such as disdain to admit a Truth, tho' they know that God himself has vouch'd it : (For this is the Remarker's Meaning, if he means any thing by these Words.) The Insinuation, I say, is so black, and so false, and so unjust, that if the Remarker has either Shame or Modesty left, he must blush at his Conduct, or else make good his Charge. In p. 18. he says, He knows of none that contends that all Errors in Religion are Damnable. My Design was evidently to shew which Errors were Criminal, and which not : And 'tis as evident that the Remarker has over and over express'd his Disapprobation of my Method of Determining this very material Question. He chuses to put it upon another bottom, and p. 24. is satisfy'd that he hath shewn that Simple Errors may be Criminal, both upon account of the Matters to which they may relate, and the Obligations we are under to avoid them. That this is not made out sufficiently, nor can be, upon the Remarker's Notions, appears from hence. 1st, He says, Every one knows, p. 45. That the Evil (of Errors) strictly speaking, lies not in Them (the Errors,) but in that peculiar Frame and Disposition of Mind which tends to betray Men into them. This I take to be very just and true ; but then the Consequence is, that Simple Errors are not Criminal upon account of the Matters to which they relate. For the Matters to which they relate, and the Disposition of Mind which betrays Men into Errors, every one knows to be very different. 2dly, Nor are simple Errors*

*Criminal*

*Criminal upon account of the Obligations we are under to avoid them: For the Will, ever conforming to what we take to be the present Dictate of the Understanding, we unavoidably err. If therefore we are under Obligations to avoid Simple Errors, and yet we must unavoidably err, we must be and are obliged to Impossibilities. 3dly, Whereas you say, p. 18. That you know of none, nor I neither, that contends that all Errors in Religion are Damnable: To do you Justice, I own that you have said, over and over, that all Errors are not Damnable; yet I do know some, and One particularly, whose Authority will weigh with you, I mean the Author of the Remarks I am now considering, from whose Principles it will follow that All Errors in Religion are Damnable. As 'twas true of Epicurus, Verbus ponit, re tollit Deos; so have you in Words asserted, That All Errors in Religion are not Damnable; but from your Principles the contrary follows. For if Simple Errors are Criminal because we are obliged to avoid them, then All Simple Errors in Religion are Criminal, and consequently Damnable, because we are obliged to avoid them. 'Tis a Principle with the Remarker, That the Obligations we are under to avoid Errors, proves them Criminal. Had He added to his Principle, When we are better inform'd, or, When we are made sensible of the Error, or something of that nature, the Principle had been just and true: But as He has put it in general Terms, I leave it to the Remarker to stave off the Consequence.*

*I had defin'd Voluntary Errors to be such as spring from Evil Choice, and cause the Will to be Evil; or such as we embrace, knowing them to be Errors. This Definition is something obscure, and made the more so, by the Printer's leaving out the Particle O R. But take it as it lay; The Remarks upon it are these: p. 23. According to this Account, there never were nor can be any Voluntary Errors in the World. For unless we are New-molded, and our very Frame so Chang'd as to be the Reverse of what 'tis now; 'tis as impossible for a Man to embrace an Error, knowing it such, as 'tis to chuse Evil, knowing it such; and this is as impossible as to hate himself. This is another*

*other Instance of the Honesty of the Remarker: Is it my Definition of Voluntary Errors, Such only as we embrace as Errors? Or are these Propositions the same, Such are Voluntary Errors which we embrace as Errors; And, Such are Voluntary which we embrace knowing them to be Errors? The former of these I'll allow him as impossible as he pleases; the latter will then be impossible, when he proves it impossible for a Man to be a Hypocrite, or to embrace an Error for bye Ends and Advantages. But I'll grant him this too, if he pleases, that 'tis impossible to embrace Errors, knowing them to be Errors. What then? Is his Conclusion good, That According to the Account which I had given of Voluntary Errors, there never were nor can be any Voluntary Errors in the World? Had not I put into the Account, Such as spring from Evil Choice, and cause the Will to be Evil? And is it impossible there shoud be such Errors in the World? May not all such Errors as arise from Negligence, Pride, Prejudice, &c. cause the Will to be Evil? Or may not Errors springing from these Causes be said to spring from Evil Choice? But 'tis in vain to urge this farther, since the Remarker was conscious to himself, that he had misrepresented me: For his next Words are, A Man, we grant, may maintain, and endeavour to propagate an Error, knowing it such, for Temporal Ends and Advantages, but this is not to embrace an Error, as such.*

*I had asserted, That Predominant Passions, which are our Infirmities, our Misfortunes, our Frailties, do not render the Simple Errors we fall into on these Accounts Punishable. That we must be very careful of our Actions, and not imagine that Predominant Passions will excuse Wicked Actions. The Substance of the Remarker's Reply, p. 34. is, If Simple Errors are Involuntary on these Accounts, the Breach of our Duties is as unavoidable, and consequently as innocent. For since he who consents to an immoral Act, always consents, *sub ratione boni*; so far consider'd, his Action is as justifiable as another's, who assents to a Criminal Error, *sub specie veri*.*

*To this I Reply, 1st, If Predominant Passions so possess the Soul, as to leave the Man no Liberty of Thought; I do*  
not

*not doubt but God, who is good to all his Works, and who knows our Weakness, will have Compassion on our Infirmities: Yet it must be allowed to be in our Powers so to govern our Passions, as to hinder them from breaking out into enormous Actions. The Laws of Reason and Religion were given us on purpose to direct and regulate our Actions, but not to make us infallible, or to prevent our falling into Error. Simple Errors therefore may be excusable upon Account of Predominant Passions; yet Breach of plain enjoin'd Duties may not be so. 2dly, Supposing that a Man acts always according to what he judges Good, yet that will not excuse him; because, by an over-hasty Choice, he lays down to himself wrong Measures of Duty: He might have prevented the evil Consequences; which, since he did not, he is chargeable with them as his own Acts: But in assenting to Error, which we judge to be Truth, supposing we search carefully, and judge according to the Evidence we have, which is all we can do, it is out of our Power to find the necessary intermediate Ideas to discover Truth by. If it was out of our Powers to abstain from immoral Actions, they could not be Criminal. Now, 'tis out of our Powers to refrain our Assent to Error, when it appears as Truth. 3dly, We are not necessarily or unavoidably carried to Action, whenever any Good appears to us; nor are we necessarily determin'd by or to the Greater Good. But we are necessarily carried to Assent to what we think has the best, and clearest, and most Proofs. 4thly, The Rules of Practice are set down so plainly, that no thinking Man ever yet mistook the Meaning of, Thou shalt do no Murder; Fear God; Love your Neighbour; whereas, to know the certain Meaning of the mysterious Truths of Christianity, has exercis'd the greatest Heads. Therefore 'tis more easy and more excusable to mistake These than Those. The Remarker puts a Question upon this Head, Whether he is not as refractory and contumacious, who denies his Assent to an Article of Faith, as he that neglects any Practical Duty? And p. 36. says, I'll be bold to affirm, That an Arian can lay no better Claim to the Plea of Involuntary Error, than the Unjust, the Extor-*

tioner, or the Intemperate. I'll endeavour therefore to prove to him, that there is a great Difference, as to Clearness, between the Mysteries and the Practical Duties of Christianity. He tells us, p. 32. That our Church holds, that the Substance in which the Three subsist, is one and the same Individual Essence or Substance. He says, p. 42. If--- the Son has one and the same singular, individual, or numerical Essence with the Father, -- This Notion wou'd be the Error of Sabellius. And p. 43. Reason plainly teaches, that He (our Saviour) must be of the same Individual substance with the Father. From these Places compared, 'tis evident that he uses Essence and Substance as Synonymous: He uses Nature and Essence so too, p. 43. He uses Individual and Numerical in like manner. He says 'tis Sabellianism, to say the Son has one and the same Individual Essence with the Father; and yet tells us, that Reason plainly teaches that our Saviour must be of the same Individual Substance with the Father. In good Truth tho' the Remarker may be able clearly to stave off Sabellianism, as clearly as he understands, Thou shalt not take the Name of God in vain; Love thine Enemies; Above all things have fervent Charity, &c. yet I own I think Sabellius himself could not have express'd his Notions more clearly than in these Words of the Remarker. Whatever therefore the Remarker may think of it, others not quite so bold, do think the Practical Duties more easy and more intelligible than these mysterious Truths, and therefore know a reason why an Error in one will be more readily excus'd than in the other. P. 46. He tells me, Rather than Heresy shall be arraign'd and condemn'd, I am for acquitting all manner of evil Thoughts, wicked Inclinations, sinful Purposes, blasphemous Opinions, and even a Diabolical Temper and Disposition of Mind. A Charge this so unjust and so malicious, that I verily think nothing but a Diabolical Temper and Disposition of Mind cou'd have invented! In the very place he is considering, I had shewn the Difference between evil and erroneous Thoughts. No, I am so far from asserting sinful Purposes, or such a Disposition of Mind, even as the Remarker here has shewn to be Innocent, that I assure him 'tis Criminal

*Criminal to the last Degree, and he will find it so, without sincere Repentance.*

*Before I take leave of the Remarker, I must a little consider his Account of Heresy. He defines it, An Obstinate Opposing some necessary Article of Faith, p. 8. Upon this Definition, which the Remarker thinks a clear one, I beg leave to observe;*

1. *That if Heresy consists in Obstinate Opposing some necessary Articles of Faith, then none can be Hereticks but such as are Obstinate. Should any one therefore Oppose a necessary Article, unless he doth it Obstinately, he can't be an Heretick.*

2. *What is here meant by Obstinate? For if I mistake not, that Word is as hard as any that could have been us'd in a clear Definition. Do you mean by it, The Refusal of due Means of Conviction offer'd, as you express it, p. 35, 55? Think if this helps the Case at all; or, who is to be Judge of the Dueness of the Means of Conviction? It is certain if it convinces not an honest, sincere Mind (and 'tis the Errors of only honest and sincere Searchers after Truth, that I assert to be Innocent) such Means are not due Means of Conviction.*

3. *No Man, by this Definition can be an Heretick, who has not had the Due Means of Conviction laid before him. So that 'tis possible for a Man to hold all the Opinions of Arius, Sabellius, Socinus, or any other Heretick, and yet be no Heretick. For to render a Man Obstinate, he must be inform'd of the Orthodox side of the Question, and have it set in such Lights too as may be sufficient to subdue the Prejudices of Education, or else he cannot be said Obstinately to oppose. 'Tis not therefore the Erroneous Man that is the Heretick: And if the Erroneous Man be acquitted, 'twill be difficult to determine who is guilty of Heresy.*

4. *Due Means of Conviction must be offer'd, and refus'd, to make a Man Obstinate. Are any Means of Conviction due Means, except Reason? You will not be so bold as to affirm Fire and Faggot to be Due Means of Conviction; nor Imprisonment, Confiscations, Fines, or Banishment: Yet these are Means which convince some, or rather*

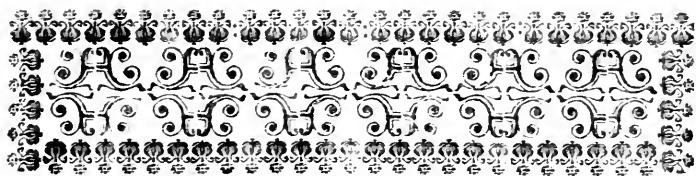
*ther silence them, tho' they have no Influence upon others. Are they Obstinate who hold out against these, because others have been convinc'd by such wholesome Severities?*

*You see by this how much your Definition exceeds others in Clearness. But I must beg pardon for calling your Definition of Heresy in question: I did not think of your Infallibility, your Power, or Authority. We have such an Instance of your Pontifical Omnipotency, p. 50, that no doubt every Body for the future will readily submit to it. We are not to learn at this time of day what is Schism, or what is Heresy. — Whom we think fit then to condemn as Schismatics or Hereticks, we rightly condemn; whom we suspect, we have good Ground to suspect. An indisputable Definition this! We! who are We? Who are the We that have this Authority? All are Hereticks whom We think fit to condemn? What? Right or Wrong? All whom we suspect, we have good Ground to suspect! Could this Man tell us, that Pride and Self-conceit are the true Original Cause of Heresy and Schism, p. 2. and not perceive himself in the High-road to the One or the Other? What a strange Spirit of Arrogancy and Haughtiness is this? Schism and Heresy are now to be measured by the Standard of the Remarker's Notions, and whom he thinks fit to join in Communion with him; and no doubt all must be Obstinate who will not tamely submit unto them.*

*I have done with the Author of the Remarks: I have only selected a few out of the very many Instances of his Ignorance, or Malice, or Bigottry, enough to shew the World that unless this Author learns, before he writes again, more Honesty, more Justice, more Humanity, and more of the true Spirit of Christianity, he can deserve nothing but Contempt.*

*I have only to advertise the Reader, that some Alterations have been made in this Second Edition, by which I have endeavour'd to express my Meaning more clearly than I had done before.*





THE  
INNOCENCY  
OF  
ERROR,  
ASSERTED and VINDICATED.

S I R,



YOU express'd, the other Day, a great deal of Concern, not without some mixture of Indignation, that I should Assert and Vindicate a Position, as you thought monstrous and detestable, viz. *No Heresy is so destructive of Religion as a Wicked Life ; No Schism so damnable as a Course of Sin.* I then urg'd some Arguments to you, which you own'd contain'd in them a *Shew* at least of Reason, and an Air of Probability : But yet you were apprehensive, that I might have used some Art or Disguise in my Words, which then you could not see through so clearly ; and therefore you desired me to lay my Reasons together, and give you an Opportunity of weighing them distinctly by your self. I here send them to you ; expecting only and desiring a *sincere love of Truth*, and a readiness to embrace her, however negligently or inartificially

dress'd up; assuring you from one who  
 Prov. iii. 15. knew the worth of *Truth* and *Wisdom*,  
 that *she is more precious than Rubies*, and  
*all the things that thou canst desire are not to be*  
*compared to her.*

To evince the Truth of the Assertion, first in General,  
 Let the Words be only consider'd, and the Thing will  
 be evident. *Religion* is an habitual Disposition of the  
 Mind to worship and to please God. Now 'tis plain, that  
 a Course of Sin is directly contrary to such a Temper;  
 nay, 'tis a Contradiction, to pretend to an *habitual Dis-*  
*position of Mind to please God*, and to Act generally so  
 as will *displease* Him, *i. e.* to lead a Wicked Life, or to  
 live in a Course of Sin. Now if *Heresy* or *Schism* be  
 not a *Contradiction* to an *habitual Disposition of Mind to*  
*worship and to please God*, then I had good ground to  
 Assert and Vindicate the Position before laid down. By  
*Heresy*, is meant usually, *An Error in Fundamentals*.  
 Put the Case now of any Heresy, *Arianism* for Instance,  
 which some pretend is reviving, or any other that you  
 please. 'Tis very possible for Men to be fully perswaded  
 of the Rightness of their Notions, (tho' they are *He-*  
*retical*) Consistent with a hearty Zeal for the Honour  
 and Worship of God. For where, I pray, is the Incon-  
 sistency? They *believe* in God, and *worship* Him with  
 all the Devotion possible; you your self cannot deny but  
 that they might do it with as much Devotion as the  
 Man that lives in a *Course of Sin*. They think them-  
 selves oblig'd to act according to the Rules which God  
 has laid down; which, if one may judge by the Sin-  
 ners Practice, he doth not. They with Diligence and  
 Industry search and endeavour to find out the Will of  
 God, and steadily keep his Laws, which they under-  
 stand the Purport of; which a *wicked* Liver never  
*strives* to do.

This you think may be allowed. *But the Arian*  
*or Socinian pays not the Honour or the Worship which*  
*he ought to the Son of God. And since no Religion can*  
*be acceptable which is contrary to the Will of God, they*  
*that are guilty of such Crimes shall suffer.*

You know my Opinion so well on these Points, that I need not tell you, I neither vindicate nor approve of the one or the other. But yet the *Arian* and *Socinian* confines his Worship to God the Father. The Sinner pays it to neither Father, Son, nor Holy Ghost: The Heretick gives not so compleat a Worship as he ought: The Wicked Man gives none. And so much at least as 'tis better to pay some part of a Debt than none at all, so much is *Heresy* better than *Sin* and *Wickedness*.

The same Answer will justify the other part of the Assertion of *Schism*.

Thus much may suffice in General as to the Assertion: But because I would willingly go to the bottom of this Question, and treat it with as much Care as I can; I'll endeavour to root up the Foundation of your Prejudices, by representing to you the *Innocency of Error*.

*Error* is the Assent of the Mind to a Proposition as true, which is not so. If this extend no farther than the Mind, 'tis what I call *Simple Error*. If a Man proceeds upon this false Bottom to regulate his Practice, such Error is then call'd a *Practical Error*. How far this latter sort of Errors falls under the cognizance of Man, or of a much higher Tribunal, that of God, will appear from the ensuing Discourse. In order to which 'tis clear, beyond Dispute, that Simple and Involuntary Errors are not, nor can be Punishable.

First, Because in the Perceptions of the Mind Men are perfectly *Passive*; and our Perceptions of Things being in numberless Instances quite different from what Things really are in themselves, unless we are capable of bringing together and comparing a great many intermediate Idea's to prove the contrary, we must necessarily be under abundance of *Errors*. Try to persuade a Countryman that the *Sun* is a great many times bigger than the Earth, or that it is a great many Thousand Miles distant from us, and he'll think you attempt only to make a Fool of him, and endeavour to persuade him out of his Senses. In these and Ten thousand such like Cases, Men are as necessarily under Errors, as they are necessary in their Perceptions. They cannot help continuing in Mistakes,

for want of proper Means to rectify them; and therefore are no more to blame for not removing them, than a Stone is to blame for moving when 'tis impell'd.

Secondly, If Simple and Involuntary Error be Punishable, then where-ever there is Error, there is Guilt, and consequently *all Men* must be guilty before God on that Account. For where is the Man that doth not entertain some Errors, either concerning things which really do exist, or in Deductions which he draws from them? Who is there that's so well vers'd in Nature, as to be Master of all her Mazes, and certain that he *knows*, I say, *knows* all her Secrets? Or who is there that ever *repented*, or *ask'd God's Pardon* for Mistakes of this Nature? And yet if Errors be *Criminal*, 'tis certain that all *Crimes unrepented of* are *Damnable*.

But 'tis allowed that a Man may be mistaken in Things of this Nature, without any *Crime* or *Fault*. But where God has concerned himself in the Discovery of any Thing, there 'tis *Criminal to Err*, or to be Ignorant.

This, tho' it may seem to carry a profound Respect for the Revelation of God, yet is plainly insufficient for the Purpose for which 'tis brought. For, 1st, Is any Man obliged to *know* or understand in the meaning which God intended every thing that is revealed? Is any Man obliged to have a distinct Knowledge of every Passage of the Scriptures, which unless he can attain to, he must necessarily be damned? Let him that thinks so, set about the Explication of the *Apocalypse*, or the old Prophets, and try if he'll be capable himself of doing what he thinks is required of others under Pain of Damnation. 2dly, 'Tis granted that 'tis a Crime not to believe what God has thought fit to reveal, supposing one knows that God has revealed it: But a Man may do this without a clear and distinct Understanding of the thing revealed. Suppose a Man should not understand who is meant by the *White Horse* in the *Revelations*, or what is the meaning of *being baptized for the Dead*, and such like; yet whilst he owns that God is the Author of these Passages, and is ready to believe them in the best manner he can get an Understanding of them, Where can be his Crime?

Why

Why, as it is not rational to conclude, that if God had design'd that we should have determinate and adequate Ideas belonging to those Sounds, he would have so express'd himself, as that we should not mistake his Meaning? 3dly, If 'tis *Criminal* to *Err* in the Meaning of a Passage of Scripture, the Crime will not rest where we are apt to fix it, but will ascend to a Place where we dare not think of Guilt, even to God himself, who has deliver'd his Will in Terms that are *ambiguous*. 4thly, The Distinction here made use of between *Errors in Things revealed*, and *Errors in other Matters*, proves directly, that *Error* as *Error* is not *Criminal*. For 'tis as much an Error to believe Heat in the Fire, as to call in question any *Theological Truth*. But I proceed,

Thirdly, If *Simple* and *Involuntary Error* be Punishable by God; then 'tis the greatest *Cruelty*, *Injustice* and *Tyranny* imaginable in him, to make such Creatures as cannot but *Err* in many Cases, and yet to punish them for *Erring*. Our *Knowledge* is but of very narrow Extent, and confined to a very few things, the rest must be resolved into Opinion; and as there are innumerable Degrees of *Assent*, from *Assurance* and *Confidence*, down to *Distrust* and *Disbelief*, there may be as many Degrees of Errors. As this then is the Make and Frame of our Constitutions, 'twould be *Cruel* and *Unjust* in God to punish us for what we cannot help, to treat us as *Breakers* of his Laws, when we only want *Light*, which the *Father of Light* alone can give.

Fourthly, If *Simple* and *Involuntary Errors* are Punishable by God, 'tis not a few *Dissenters* in a Nation, (tho' 'tis only these more openly are struck at by the Abettors of such Unchristian Tenets) no, nor Ten thousand times ten thousand, that must perish everlastingly; but the Flames of Hell will reach to almost, if not quite, all the Christian World. Let us look into the several Communities of Christians, and by an impartial View of their *professed* Tenets, see how by the Lump whole Nations must be damn'd, if *Errors* are damnable. The *Greek Church* denies the *Procession of the Holy Ghost* from the *Son*; the *Melchites* do the same; so do the *Georgians*

*Georgians and Muscovites*: The *Nestorians* maintain the Heresy of *Nestorius*, averring *two Persons* as well as two Natures in our Saviour; the *Christians of St. Thomas* do the same: The *Jacobites* are *Eutichians*: The *Egyptians* *circumcise*, and give the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to Infants: The *Abassines* *circumcise*: The *Armenians* believe as the *Greeks* about the *Proceſſion* of the *Holy Ghoſt*, and receive Infants to the Communion: The *Maronites* do the ſame, and are *Monothelites*, or lately were ſo, till they reconciled themſelves to the *Romiſh Church*, which I doubt has but little leſſened their Errors: The *Romiſh Religion* is but as full of Errors as it has Practices; their *Idolatry* and *Superſtition* are as evident as their Profeſſion of *Transubſtantiation*, and all their *Divinity* but a Medly of *Nonſence* and *Absurdity*. If we look upon Proteſtantism, we can't but own all the *Diſſenters* from the *Church of England* to be erroneous. Thoſe of *Geneva*, *France*, and *Holland* think themſelves *Chriſtians*, though they have no Miniſtry, *i. e.* no *Episcopacy*, and conſequently no *Sacraments*; and therefore are left to *uncovenanted Mercies*, which 'tis certain *Chriſtians* are not. *Scotland* is in the ſame unhappy Condition. The *Lutherans* *conſubſtanti-ate*. In a Word, all are in Error, but our *Happy Church*, thrice happy, if we can but keep in the ſame ſtate we are in, and never part with the moſt *trifling* and moſt *indifferent* Ceremony or Circumſtance, to bring over the greateſt Body of *Diſſenters*! Heaven will be replenished with us alone; and never Pope ſpoke ſo infallibly as he who paid the Compliment to us, that *Angli* are *quæſi Angeli*. I need not ſpeak a Word about the *Heathens* or the *Mahometans*, which make up (if we believe Mr. *Breerwood's* Computation) 25 Parts of 30 of the World; of the remaining Five, all but our little *Duſt upon the Balance*, our *Drop in the Sea*, are to go into everlaſting Punishment, *into a Place where the Fire is not quenched, and the Worm never dies*. In ſhort, Heaven is made only for a *Part of England*, and a much leſs Part too than is perhaps imagined. For the Men that would be in Charity with the *Diſſenters*, that think *they* have a

Right

Right to a *Toleration*, as much as they have to be *Protestants*, the *Whigs*, unhappy Men, worthy of better Fate! such bad Churchmen must go — their Enemies will tell them where.

You will be ready to evade the Force of this Argument, by retorting it in some such manner as this, That *Sin* therefore is not damnable, because all Mankind are Sinners. For where is the Difference in the Arguments? *If Damnation be the Consequence of Sin; it will follow, that all Mankind being Sinners, all Mankind must be damned: And, Damnation being put as the Consequence of Error, all Mankind being under Errors, all Mankind must be damned.* Where is the Difference, you'll perhaps ask, of these Arguments, that the one is a good, the other is a bad one? But,

To this the Answer is so easie, that I shall not insist on it farther, than to observe, That all Sin unrepented of is damnable; but Error cannot be repented of, because we take it to be Truth: Therefore we see all the World dies in Errors of some sort or other, never asking Pardon of or for them. But Sin is always *repented* of by every sober good Christian, whether he be a *Grecian*, *Roman Catholick*, or *Protestant*: Which shews that all the World agree in a great and material Difference in the Cases. But this makes

A Fifth Argument, why Error cannot be Punishable, because we cannot repent of Error. I do not say, a Man cannot *retract* an Error, which is some sort of *Repentance*, if you think fit to call it so; but, a Man can have no Sting of *Conscience*, no *Remorse*, no *Self-condemning Notions*, for having been under a Mistake, unless it has affected his Actions. For *Error* being a Mistake of the Judgment, it must direct and guide our Actions as much as *Truth* it self. Now the Sway of Truth, is, by directing our Actions according to our Judgment; and if that be misinform'd, or be misguided, the Effect must be the same as of Truth, as flowing from the same Principle. Now as 'tis a Contradiction to be *fully persuaded* of any Point, and to repent of it at the same time, 'twill follow, that Error cannot be *repented* of. And who is there in

Ten thousand, or in a great many times that Number, that doth not die in numberless Errors about one thing or other, which yet he takes to be so many real Truths? Who is there that strives to make his Peace with God, for such things which he has endeavoured to free himself from, but yet continues in them, not through any fault of his Will? Sin being *voluntary*, and our own Act, we *repent* of it, and ask God's *Pardon* for it. But Error in Judgment, when we do our Endeavours sincerely to attain Truth, is not an *Action*; in that we are *Passive*, and consequently 'tis not our *own* Deed, nor imputable to *us*, more than other things, which we can neither prevent their happening, nor remedy after they have happened. Every Man may therefore say, what the incomparable Mr. Chillingworth says, *If Men suffer themselves neither to be betrayed into their Errors, nor kept in them by any Sin of their Will; if they do their best Endeavours to free themselves from all Errors, and yet fail of, thro' human Frailty; so well am I perswaded of the Goodness of God, that if in me alone should meet a confluence of of all such Errors, of all the Protestants of the World that were thus qualified, I should not be so much afraid of them all, as I should be to ask Pardon for them. For — to ask Pardon of simple and purely involuntary Errors, is tacitly to imply that God is angry with us for them; and that were to impute to him the Tyranny of requiring Brick where he gives no Straw, of expecting to gather where he srewed not, to reap where he sowed not, of being offended with us, for doing what he knows we cannot do.* Answer to the Preface, § 26.

For these Reasons it is that I conclude, that *simple* and *involuntary Error* cannot be punishable: And such must be reckon'd not only Errors that have been *critically* examin'd by every particular Person, but such as have been searched by the Rule of common *Human Prudence* and *Discretion*. Those must not be reckon'd *voluntary* which arise from the common Springs of *Error*, (tho' these are too often reckon'd such) *viz.* Authority, preconceiv'd *Hypotheses*, or even predominant Passions themselves; much less are those to be reckon'd guilty of *voluntary*



*voluntary Errors*, who want either Abilities or Opportunities to search after Truth. Such only are *voluntary* as spring from evil Choice, and cause the Will to be evil; or such as we embrace, knowing them to be Errors; or such as we embrace or retain through Prejudice, Sloth, and such-like Causes.

You will not, I know, admit it for Truth, without good Proof, that Errors springing from the Causes just now mention'd, are not Criminal: I shall therefore consider them distinctly, and see if there be any *Sin* or *Evil* in *simple Errors* so occasion'd.

First then, That *simple Error* is not Criminal or Punishable, which springs from *Authority*. The Bulk of Mankind, 'tis certain, have not *Abilities* or *Time* sufficient to enquire after abstruse Truths, and therefore must be either entirely *ignorant*, or take up with the Notions their *Parents*, *Nurses*, or *Masters* have inculcated: Others are guided by, and see entirely with the Eyes of such whom they propose as their *Friends*. Others there are, who think nothing *true*, but what is to be found amongst the Antients, and think it an infallible Note, that *Aristotle* in *Philosophick* Matters, some or other of the *Fathers* in *Religious* ones, have said it: Some resign their Minds to *Mother Church*, blindly, and never enter into or examine the Reasons upon which they ground their Faith. Others take up with the *current* Opinions, and imagine Error could never spread it self so wide, and captivate such and such *great* Persons. In short, these are all, to their respective Guides, just what *Sancho* was to *Don Quixot*, 'Squires of Knights-Errent; they are fully perswaded of *Enchantments*, *Gyants*, and *Adventures* which their *Masters* dream of, they bring themselves into frequent Scrapes to justify them, and then expect the Islands or Earldoms as the Rewards of their Follies.

To shew you that the *simple Errors* of such are not Criminal, let it be consider'd, That Authority is not only a Means of Information, but is a Ground of Persuasion too in several Instances. 'Tis allow'd, that in Things which are not adapted to our present Capacities, (such

as are all the Myſteries of Religion) *Authority* is the Ground of our Belief; becauſe no Truth is more certain, no Maxim is more evident than this, That the *God of Truth cannot, will not lye*. Now his *Authority* is grounded on his *Veracity*, and *Integrity*, and *Abilities*. In Things ſuited to our preſent State, as 'tis impoſſible to arrive at any knowledge of numberleſs Things, unleſs we have them from others; ſo their *Authority* is of juſt and equal weight with their *Veracity*, *Integrity*, and *Powers*. If any one therefore is ſeduced, by means of a Deſect in any of the before-mention'd Requiſites, 'tis plain, that the *Error* is not from want of *Will* to know the *Truth*, but want of *Power* to attain it. The Canal through which it was to paſs is ſtopp'd, and therefore it is impoſſible to get at it. In Perſons who cannot *Read*, 'tis evident that they muſt depend on others for Information in their Religion. If theſe are under Errors, 'tis plain they have them either from ſuch as they receive Inſtruction from, or elſe they are the Deductions which they make from the Principles which are taught them. If the Errors are of the former ſort, they are plainly *involuntary* and *neceſſary*, and conſequently *not their own*; and to be puniſh'd for them, is to be puniſh'd for other Peoples Acts. If they are their own Deductions, yet they are *involuntary*; for every *Honeſt Man* will do his beſt to pleaſe God. Let a Man but take care of his *Actions*, that they are *good* and *regular*; and for his *Notions*, let him uſe but common *Prudence* and *Diſcretion*, and a God of infinite Goodneſs will not be ſo rigid a Task-maſter as to *require Brick without Straw* from us. *Prudence* and *Diſcretion* will oblige us to depend on the *Authority* of others, where poſſibly *they*, and conſequently *we*, may be miſtaken. To puniſh us for ſuch Errors, would be the ſame as to require us to act *imprudently* and *indiscreetly*; which a God of infinite *Wiſdom* cannot expect from us. Beſides, either *all* Errors are Criminal which ſpring from *Authority*, or *none*. If you ſay the latter, you give up the *Queſtion* at once: If the former, then 'tis certain that a Means  
of

of Information, and a Ground of Perswasion, is render'd not only dangerous, but inconsistent with Prudence and Discretion. For 'twould be *imprudent* to hazard Damnation, upon crediting any Body; and yet 'tis impossible to with-hold Assent, when there seems to be greater degrees of Probability for what is said, than against it. If only *some* Errors, which spring from this Fountain, are Criminal, then 'tis plain that the Faultiness of them must be caused by something else besides Authority.

Secondly: Nor is that *simple Error* Criminal which proceeds from *Pre-conceived Hypotheses* or *Positions*, such as being *false*, are admitted for *true*. Such Pre-conceptions being erroneous, it is in vain to expect any thing from them but Errors; and if the *Hypotheses* are not Criminal, that which flows from them directly cannot be so. He that searches after Truth, ought critically to examine the Principles he goes upon, and must take care that every Step is fairly deduc'd, or else he'll quickly find that 'tis not the Light of Truth, but an *Ignis fatuus*, which he pursues. 'Tis *Inadvertency*, when any one takes up with Prepossessions: But then, as sure as *Inadvertency* is very consistent with Sincerity, so sure it is that a God of Goodness and Justice cannot punish them when join'd together. 'Tis very possible for a Man to imagine that he sees a Connexion between two Propositions, when there really is none; as, on the contrary, not to perceive it where there is. *The Idea of God, proves his Existence*, is a Position so far from true, that nothing seems a plainer Paralogism; and yet how many are there who contend for its Evidence, as being one of the shortest and most direct Conclusions imaginable? And yet, should an Atheist be convinced of the Being of a God; from that Argument, would any one affirm that he would be liable to Punishment, for his Error? Should any one, seduced by the Ambiguity of the Word *God*, in the Sacred Writings, maintain an *absolute Equality* of the Persons of the Ever-blessed Trinity in every respect: This would be, if I mistake not, direct *Trithism*. Or otherwise, If any one should assert the

Word *One God*, speaking of the Three Persons of the Trinity, to signify *one individual Essence or Substance* under *different Personal Characters*; this would be the Error of *Sabellius*. Should any Assert either of these Notions, yet may he not act with *Honesty* and *Sincerity*? May he not have a cordial Love for *God* and his *Christ*? May he not be strictly *Religious*, i. e. live temperately, soberly, and godlily? And if these are the things which *alone* are required by *God* in order to *Salvation*, why should we imagine that he will damn us for our Notions that are out of our Powers whether we will believe them or not? In short, an *Hypothesis* may be receiv'd as true, which may be false; or as false, which may be true; without any Wilfulness, Insincerity, or Resolution to maintain it right or wrong. One may not see the Error for want of *Abilities*, or by bewildring one's self in intricate Means of discovering Truth, one may sit down with Error, and embrace a Shadow instead of a Goddess. In these, and such-like Cases, if we guard against evil Practices, if we take care that our Actions are but regular and agreeable to the Laws of *Christ*, I do not see what Harm can ensue. Therefore,

Thirdly: In Cases where there is want of *Abilities* to know an Error, or want of *Opportunity*, I need not prove that Truth is *out of our Power* to come at it, and consequently that we are *necessarily* under Error, and therefore not liable to Punishment. I'll only add,

That even predominant Passions hindering us in the search after Truth, do not render simple Errors punishable. *Knowledge*, 'tis certain, is not more in our *Will* than *Perception* is, nor can we help assenting to what we think has the best, and clearest, and most Proofs. We cannot assent to any Truth, but such as we judge of our selves, according to the Probabilities we have. If any Passion therefore predominates and weighs more with us than the coolest Reason does, we cannot but err; 'tis our *Misfortune*, 'tis our *Frailty*, 'tis our *Infirmity*, and we are unhappy in it; but not our *Fault* or *Crime*: We become the Objects of Goodness and Mercy, not of Justice or Severity. But here we must  
be

be very careful of our *Actions*, and not imagine that *Predominant Passions* will excuse wicked *Actions*. For Reason and Religion being given us in order to regulate our stubborn Wills, and to make us happy here, by promoting Love and Charity, and Universal Benevolence; if we suffer our Passions to take Fire, and break in upon these Duties, we become responsible to the Great Judge of all our *Actions*.

You will be apt to ask here, If no sort of Error be Criminal? Will a Man be justified before God, who is guilty of *Heresy*, because, forsooth, he is *Passionate*, or because he follows a great many who have gone before him in the same Track, or because he takes up with whimsical Notions which are acknowledged Falshoods? Is not this to make a *Chaos* and Confusion amongst Mankind? Is there no Difference between erroneous Persons and others, nothing between *Orthodoxy* and *Heresy*? Is it all one, if a Man be an *Arian*, a *Socinian*, a *Macedonian*, or let him have what Notions he pleases, so they are but *Involuntary*, and do not break forth into *Action*?

I shall turn the Edge of this *Popular Clamour*, (for I cannot allow it the Name of an *Argument*) in a few Words. As,

First: All *Voluntary* Errors are Criminal, because they are Contempts of God, who has given us Souls and Powers to search after Truth: And 'tis the Improvement of our Souls we are to mind; and *wilfully* to refuse and neglect that, is to act contrary to the Purpose of God, in vesting us with such Faculties. But what a Difference is there between this Conduct, and our falling into Errors thro' Infirmary, or by Necessity? Let Voluntary Errors therefore be as *Criminal* as you please, but then lay them to the Charge of only such as are *guilty* of them, and be very sure who are such; for remember, 'tis not your bare Charge will make them so.

Secondly: An Heretick will not be justified *because* he is *Passionate*, or because he follows a Multitude, and has great *Authorities* for his Errors, but because his *Errors* are *involuntary*. He doth his best to rid himself of that Slavery which ties down his Mind to Error, but  
finds

finds himself unable to gain the Mastery. He can say as *St. Paul* does, *Rom. 7. 18. To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I know not.* Where-ever it can be shewn that *Heresy* or *Schism* is a *known voluntary Act*, there to be sure 'tis *Criminal*, and no doubt that *God* and *Man* too justly may and will take cognizance of it. But when it is *involuntary*, by a *Man's* pursuing the *Truth*, *Schism* or *Heresy* is so far from being *damnable*, that I can't but think 'tis highly *commendable*, because it evidences *Honesty*, *Sincerity*, *Love of God*, and of *Truth*, and regards not the *Praise of Men*. Such *Men* will meet with *Mercy* at the *Last Day* from a *God of Mercy*, how great soever their *Errors* may be, because they did it *ignorantly in Unbelief*. 'Tis not the following *Multitudes*, that excuses *Men*; but 'tis doing their best to know the *Will of God*, which takes off the *Imputation of Sin and Guilt*. Therefore,

Thirdly, A *Man* may be branded with the ignominious *Characters* of an *Arian*, *Sabellian*, or what you please; but if he be *honest* and *sincere*, and hath done his best to rid himself of those *Notions*, and yet he cannot but think them true, *i. e.* agreeable to *Revelation* and *Reason*, I can see no reason but that one *Heaven* may receive him, as well as it may the most *Orthodox*. But this will appear more clearly hereafter.

Hitherto I have consider'd *Error* abstractly, let me next consider it in the *concrete*.

All *Persons* under the *Misfortune* of *Error*, are either,

First, Such as err in purely *Speculative Matters*. Or,

Secondly, Such whose *Errors* have *no necessary Connexion with Practice*, but yet may possibly have an *Influence* upon it. Or,

Thirdly, Such whose *Errors* have a *Connexion* with *Practice*, but they do not see it. Or,

Lastly, Such as err, and justify their *Practical Errors*.

First, Such as err in purely *Speculative Matters*, (I speak of *Persons* who have endeavoured to know the *Truth*, but cannot attain unto it,) such, I say, are as *free from Crime or Fault*, as 'tis possible for such as are *Orthodox* in those *Points* to be. For he that with *Sincerity* searches

searches after Truth, is under a *necessity* of *assenting* to such Propositions as seem to him to have the greatest degree of Probability on their sides. 'Tis out of our Powers not to think that *truest*, for which the strongest Arguments can be brought. Let Evidence, or the greatest degree of Probability prevail, and give a ready Ear to that, and no Danger can ensue from God, if none doth from wicked Men. In the various Speculations concerning the Blessed *Trinity*, 'tis granted by all that they are in the Dark, as to many Particulars: That where God has not revealed his Mind, 'tis *ridiculous* and *absurd* for Man to presume positively to determine. 'Tis plain too, that very *honest*, and very *sincere*, and very *pious* Men have erred, or are *suspected* to have erred, in their Notions upon this Point; from whence 'tis plain that Revelation has not *clearly and distinctly* laid down the things which have been so much canvass'd. Now if it be a good Principle, (and what *Protestant* is there that ever call'd it in question?) That *the Scriptures are clear in all Fundamental Points*; then it follows, that it cannot be a Fundamental Error to recede from any Man's particular Determination *how the Three are One*. The Errors which arise about *that*, arise from want of sufficient Revelation; which Men endeavour to supply by, or reconcile to *Reason*, that other Light which God has kindled in every Man's Breast, in order to enlighten his Ways. He that studies *sincerely* this or any other Point, with design to honour his Great Creator, by searching and examining what he has revealed, by endeavouring to find out what he has discover'd; in a word, he that doth his best to know his Master's Will, and to find out his Meaning, and yet errs; to dare to say that such a Man *sins*, and shall be *punished for it* hereafter; is little less than *Blasphemy*. For 'tis a consequential *Denial* of God's *Goodness* and *Justice*, to affirm him resolved to punish any Man for *involuntary Errors*, for what he knows we cannot with all our Pains and Industry attain the Knowledge of. "To say, that when a place of Scripture (says the incomparable Mr. Chillingworth, c. 2. §. 104.) by reason of ambiguous Terms, lies indifferent  
" between

“ *between divers Senses, whereof one is true, and the*  
 “ *other is false; that God obliges Men under the Pain*  
 “ *of Damnation not to mistake thro’ Error and human*  
 “ *Frailty; is to make God a Tyrant, and to say that he*  
 “ *requires us certainly to attain that End, for the at-*  
 “ *taining whereof we have no certain Means; which is*  
 “ *to say, that, like Pharaoh, he gives no Straw and*  
 “ *requires Brick, that he reaps where he sows not, that*  
 “ *he gathers where he strews not, that he will not be*  
 “ *pleas’d with our utmost Endeavours to please him, with-*  
 “ *out full, and exact, and never-failing Performance;*  
 “ *that his Will is, we should do what he knows we cannot*  
 “ *do; that he will not accept of us according to that*  
 “ *which we have, but requireth of us what we have not;*  
 “ *which whether it consisteth with his Goodness, with his*  
 “ *Wisdom, or with his Word, I leave it to honest Men*  
 “ *to judge.* I cannot forbear transcribing from him the  
 following Instance, which is so exactly parallel to the  
 Matter in hand: “ *If I should send a Servant to Paris, or*  
 “ *Rome, or Jerusalem, and he using his utmost Diligence*  
 “ *not to mistake his Way, yet notwithstanding meeting*  
 “ *often with such Places where the Road is divided into*  
 “ *several Ways, whereof one is as likely to be true, and*  
 “ *as likely to be false as any other, should at length mi-*  
 “ *stake, and go out of the Way: Would not any Man say,*  
 “ *that I were an impotent, foolish, and unjust Master,*  
 “ *if I should be offended with him for doing so? And shall*  
 “ *we not tremble to impute that to God, which we*  
 “ *would take in foul Scorn, if it were imputed to our-*  
 “ *selves? Certainly, I, for my part, fear I should not*  
 “ *love God, if I should think so strangely of him.*

For any one therefore to imagine it Zeal for God to  
 persecute Men for Errors in Speculation, what is it but  
 to betray an Ignorance of God and of his Attributes. ’Tis  
 calling God a Tyrant, to say that he will punish them;  
 and ’tis making Men the Devil’s Agents, for them to pu-  
 nish them: ’Tis Pride, Malice, and Uncharitableness;  
 ’tis promoting the Power and Designs of Satan, and en-  
 couraging that scandalous and diabolical Vice Hypocrisy;  
 ’tis suppressing Truth it self; ’tis putting a stop to In-  
 dustry;



*dustry*: in a word, 'tis neither *entring one's self*, nor *letting others*, (as much as we can help it) *enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*.

When therefore I see a Man of *Pride* and *Haughtiness*, of *Insolence*, *Art* and *Cunning*, one that *never speaks his real Sentiments*, but such Things as may make an Auditory *think him* entirely in theirs; one that recommends *Concord* and *Unanimity*, and in order thereto endeavours to perswade *others* to leave off all hard Words, yet instantly rises up and uses them *himself*, fearful lest another should bear away the Prize of Elocution, or outstrip him in *Honours*, *Interest*, or *Favour*, aiming to be *Head* of a *Party*, tho' it be but of *Rebels*, and yet ever preaching against *Rebellion*; throwing out *W Names*, *Insinuations*, and *Reproaches* liberally upon an Adversary, for the *very things* he has been guilty of *himself*, acting always a *double Part*; so *scrupulously* zealous for the *Glory* of God, and the *Respect* to be paid to the *Sacred Pages*, as to imagine a *Scripture Story* *prophaned* if put upon a *Sign*; in short, when I see a Man *ambitious*, and resolv'd to sacrifice all to please the Party in which he is engaged: Sure I am, that one of *this* or the *like Temper* will shew a *mighty Zeal* against Error, will be ready to damn any one for an *Heretick*, tho' he understands no more of the Subject than a Horse doth, and will be for all the *Arbitrary Proceedings* and *Tyrannical Persecutions* that he can promote. Such an Haranguer will be *obstinate* in his *Opinion*, *positive* and *confident* in what he asserts, and nothing, no, not the whole *Bench of Bishops*, should they be ready to deliver an Opinion contrary to his, would be able to alter the least tittle of his haughty Spirit. Were not this *Spirit of Popery* too-too rife among *Protestants*, I had not digressed, but had sooner proceeded to the

Second sort of Persons under Error, *viz.* such whose Errors have no necessary connexion with their Practice, but yet may possibly and accidentally have an Influence upon it. As the former sort of *erroneous* Persons were *Innocent* and *free from Guilt*, so are *these*, if the *Acci-*

*dents* do not happen which may influence their *Actions*. The *Guilt of Error* is always to be measur'd by the *ill Effects* design'd, or really *produced*. Whilst *Error* continues in the *Mind*, it has no other *Evil* in it than *Thought* has; which, whilst it has no *connexion* with *Practice*, is never reckon'd *Evil*. Should any one be firmly perswaded that God has a *Secret Will*, contrary to his *Revealed Will*, the *Error* will not be imputed to him, unless his *Actions* are *contrary* to the *Revealed Will*: Or, in a more proper Instance, should a Man mistake the Meaning of the word *ὁμοῦσις*, of *One Substance*, and think it means *One Individual Substance*, and notwithstanding all he can do in examining and comparing *Texts of Scripture*, yet he continues fixed in that, as the only *Means* of understanding how *God is One*; I see not how he would distinguish himself from some of our *Unitarians*, as they call themselves, or from the *Heresy* of *Sabellius*. Or, suppose that one should think the *Creed*, commonly call'd of *Athanasius*, to be so agreeable to the *Tenor* of *Scripture*, that 'twould be inconsistent with the *true Interest* of the *Christian Religion* to have it expung'd the *Book of Common Prayer*. These and abundant more such *Errors* have *no necessary connexion* with *Practice*; but yet a Man may by *Accident* be influenc'd from these *Principles*, in such a manner as to become *Criminal*. He may make an *unnecessary Separation*; he may be *uncharitable*; he may think it a \* *putting both them that differ in Opinion from him, and himself too, into a Gulf of Perdition, by throwing up the Essentials of Faith, and the Uniformity of Worship*, and by that means may be guilty of *enormous Actions*. These will justly fall under the cognizance of God; and the Searcher of Hearts, at the Day of Judgment, will certainly *punish* such *Crimes*: But the *Error* it self not being attended with any *wicked Action*, but entertain'd with *Peace*, and *Love*, and *Charity*, and at first embraced as a real

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\* Dr. Sackville's Sermon on the Perils of False Brethren.

Truth, after our best Endeavour to know the Truth, the *Error*, I say, under *these Circumstances* will not be *punished*.

But to confirm this to you the more, let me add this as a *Criterion*, by which we may judge of Error and its Innocency. *All such things may a Man err in safely, of which he may safely be ignorant*: For if his Salvation is not at stake by reason of his *Nescience*, supposing he masters the Truth he aims at, 'tis *superfluous* Knowledge in respect of Salvation; and therefore if he mistakes it, he mistakes about something which has no relation to his Salvation.

But you'll be apt to reply to this, that *evil Thoughts* are reckoned by our Saviour amongst *the things which defile a Man*, Mat. 15. 19, 20. and will certainly be punished, being certainly *sinful*. And Errors are *evil Thoughts* which injure the Soul, which exclude the Light of Truth, and consequently *defile* and pollute the Soul, and therefore must render a Man obnoxious to Punishment.

I need not stay to tell you, that by *evil Thoughts* is not meant *Erroneous ones*, but such as, if prosecuted, will produce *evil Actions*. Certain it is, that *first Motions* are not in our Powers; and God could not be said to act with *Justice*, much less with *Equity* or *Mercy*, should he punish what is not in our Powers to prevent. But if these *first Motions* (which I suppose to be of *evil Thoughts*) be *indulg'd*, if we take a *Pleasure* in them, 'tis evident then that we declare our *Approbation* of them, and consequently we make them *our own*, and by that means the Man is *defiled*, and will be *punish'd* for it.

Secondly, A Man may be mistaken in numberless Instances, which if he prosecutes, yet his Errors will not produce evil Actions: But then a Man cannot entertain an *evil Thought*, but if he prosecutes that, it will produce *wicked Acts*; which plainly shews a great Difference betwixt *evil* and *erroneous* Thoughts.

To strengthen this, let me add an Observation or two, *viz.* 1st, That no-where in all the Scriptures do the *Apostles* or our blessed Saviour ever assert, that Men shall be punished for *Simple Errors*. 2dly, Every-where, when Occasion is taken to treat of the Proceedings of the Day of Judgment, we find that our *Actions*, and *they only*, are the Subjects of Enquiry. In that we have *DONE Good or Evil*, the *WORKERS of Iniquity* are to be rewarded or punished. Vid. Mat. 7. 21, 23. c. 13. 41. c. 16. 27. c. 25. 31, — 46. Luke 13. 26. John 5. 29. Rom. 2. 6, 7, 10, &c. From these and other Passages of the same Import, I conclude that either the Judge of Mankind, Christ, who is over All, God blessed for evermore, has not *truly* told us the Subjects of his Enquiry at the Last Day, which would be Blasphemy to say; or else *Errors* which do not produce *evil Actions* will not be punished. I proceed to the

Third Sort of erroneous Persons, *viz.* such whose *Errors* have a *necessary Connexion* with Practice, but yet the Connexion is not seen. However *plain* and *evident* the Consequences of them are to *others*, yet whilst they are *denied* and *avoided* as so much Poison by them who embrace the Error, such Mistake cannot but be very *innocent*. There is not a plainer Connexion between any *Principle* and its *Consequences*, than there is between a fix'd Belief of a *Fatality*, and the *Reasonableness* of running up to a loaded Cannon's Mouth; or between a firm Persuasion of God's having *predestinated* and *elected*, or *reprobated* Men before they have done either *Good* or *Evil*, and the *Gratification* of our *Inclinations*; and yet Numbers that steadily believe the one, will detest and abhor the other: And yet it seems very clear that if a Man be absolutely *predestinated* to Happiness, and cannot fall from Grace, what should hinder him from indulging his Appetites, or from enjoying all the Pleasures of this Life since he cannot on any Account fail of the next? Or in another Instance, They that maintain *Good Works* not to be *necessary* to *Salvation*, but resolve all  
into

into Faith, why should not they prosecute their Pleasures and give the loose to their Appetites? Yet notwithstanding the seemingly evident Connexion, they would lay down their Lives rather than admit the Conclusion. The Reason of this Conduct seems to be this: They admit an Error as an indisputable Truth; or, which amounts to the same in this Case, they are deceived by an ambiguous Expression of Scripture. The Principle it self they take up with is *true*, when rightly understood; and finding it in Scripture, they are positive that no Demonstration is stronger than this is; God hath said it, therefore 'tis true. But running away with the *Words*, they leave the *Meaning* behind them, and admit *Verbal Principles* (if I may call them so) instead of *Mental* ones. They therefore will deny a Consequence which they find to be inconsistent with all the other Notions of Religion which they entertain. They have the good Fortune to be kept in their respective *Duties* by other Reasons, which are *clear*, and *plain*, and *positive*; and seeing the Consequences deduced from their erroneous Principles stare them so boldly in their Faces, they abominate them: Not because they really do not follow, but because they are evidently disagreeable to other Notions elsewhere imbib'd. Had all Men *Judgment* to discern *Error* from *Truth*, no one would continue under *Error*. The Firmness with which they embrace the Notions which they think are contained in the *Word* of *God*, shews them *Lovers* of *God*, and of his *Christ*: It shews them *honest*, and very unwilling that Man should extort from them any *Sacred Truth*. They are ready to sacrifice their Lives to Man, in proof, that with *Sincerity* they believe what *God*, they think, has revealed. They do their *best Endeavours* to know his Will, and to act according to it, and therefore *Errors* in such Persons signify no more than *no Errors*. Supposing they had had the good Fortune to believe right, they would have been but the same *good Men*, their *Practices* had been the same; and since 'tis our *Works* that will be rewarded or punished, they

they seem to be deserving of *greater* Degrees of Rewards, who continue *good*, notwithstanding Principles which have a necessary Connexion with *Evil*. For if one who resists the *Force of Temptation*, is more *deservedly* praised than he that has had no such *Stumbling-block* laid in his Way; he that is *good* in spite of *Principle* seems to have a fairer Claim than others. But be that as it will, sure it is, that the *Errors* of such People spring not from *Choice* or *Will*, but from the Force of what they think *Scripture* and *Reason*. And if, as Mr. Chillingworth incomparably argues, “ *By reason of*  
“ *the seeming Conflict which is oftentimes between Scrip-*  
“ *ture, Reason, and Authority on the one side, and*  
“ *Scripture, Reason, and Authority on the other; if by*  
“ *reason of the variety of Tempers, Abilities, Educations,*  
“ *and unavoidable Prejudices, whereby Mens Under-*  
“ *standings are variously formed and fashioned, they do*  
“ *embrace several Opinions, whereof some must be erro-*  
“ *neous; to say that God will damn them for such Errors,*  
“ *who are Lovers of him, and Lovers of Truth, is to rob*  
“ *Man of his Comfort, and God of his Goodness, is to*  
“ *make Man desperate, and God a Tyrant. Answer to*  
“ *the Preface, §. 26.*

The Fourth and Last, and *only bad* sort of erroneous Persons, are such as *err*, and *practise* according to, and *justify their practical Errors*. These 'tis certain will meet with their Deserts, the heaviest of God's just Punishments: And the reason of it is, in such there is a *want of Honesty*, or which is worse, the actual Practice of *Dishonesty*, *Insincerity*, and their *Consequents*. Here is *affected Ignorance*, no desire of Information or Amendment: Here is a *Breach of clear, positive Laws*, and the Concurrence of *Will* and *Choice* to render it *perfect Malice*.

The *Zeal* and *Warmth* of some will be for loading this fourth Article, and for bringing under these Characters all whom they think fit to damn for *Schism* or *Heresy*, or even such whom they *suspect* of these Crimes. Enough has been said already, I think, to satisfy an *intelligent*,

*ligent, impartial* Person. But yet I beg leave to subjoin, what will add a considerable Force to what has been already offered to you, *viz.* the Consideration of the *Obligations* all Men are under to follow their *Consciences*, even tho' they are *Erroneous*.

Agreed on all Hands it is, that a *Conscience* directed by the *Will* and *Word* of God, obliges a Man to act according to its Dictates. Now *Conscience* being the Judgment which every Man passes upon his Actions, as to the *Goodness* or *Illness* of them, the Question is only, How far a Man is obliged to act in Cases where he is mistaken in his Judgment? Now to this the Answer is easie, That a Man is obliged *always* to follow his *Judgment*, tho' 'tis *erroneous*. For,

First, *Conscience*, or our *Judgment* concerning our Actions, is a Power or Faculty of the Mind which God has implanted in us, on purpose to be the *Rule* of our Actions. When therefore we act in contradiction to that, our Actions are *voluntary* and contrary to the *Knowledge* we have of God, consequently we are guilty of *voluntary Disobedience*, *i. e.* of Sin against God.

Secondly, The *Evil* of any Action is always measured and judged of by God, and all good Men, by the *Intention* of the *Agent*. What a Man doth *necessarily*, is none of *his* Act; but so far as he *concurs*, *consents*, and *wills* any Action, so far is he the Agent. In an Action therefore committed against *Conscience*, the *Will* being supposed entirely to concur, the Agent must necessarily be *dishonest*, *insincere*, and consequently guilty of a Vice.

Or thus : That is the perpetual *Rule* of all our Actions, which if we follow, we are reckon'd *honest*; if we do not, we are reckon'd *dishonest*. Now such is *Conscience* : We are *honest* if we follow and practise *Vertue*, known to us to be *Vertue*; as likewise if we hate *Vice*, known to us to be such. Now *Conscience* being our *Guide* or *Rule*, and *Villany* and *Hypocrisie* being the swerving from it, acting *against Conscience*,  
must

must be *Villany*. Shou'd a *Few* pretend to turn *Christian*, and offer himself at the *Font* for *Baptism*, and yet not *believe* Christ to be come, nor any thing of *Christianity*; every one would justly detest his *Hypocrisy* and *Roguery*, which is justly imputable to him, for acting contrary to his *Conscience*.

Thirdly, The Sacred Pages justifie the same Doctrine, telling us, *Rom. 14. 23. Whatsoever is not of Faith is Sin.* St. Paul is plainly asserting that to be *Sin*, which proceeds not from a *firm and full Perswasion* of Mind, that it is *lawful* and *agreeable* to the *Will* of God. Now, whatsoever is *contrary* to *Conscience*, is *contrary* to *such a Perswasion*. Nay, St. Paul carries this much farther in the former part of the Verse, *He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of Faith.* And if he that *doubteth* is liable to Punishment, because he doth a thing which he knows not whether it be lawful or not; much more doth he *Sin*, who acts contrary to *Faith* and full Perswasion of Mind.

*Obj.* You'll say, perhaps, Notwithstanding all this and more which may be urged, that a Man's *Conscience* cannot be the *Rule* of his Actions, because a *Rule* must always be *right* and *strait*; but *Conscience* very often swerves from *Straitness*, by Errors: Therefore some other *Rule*, even the *Rule of Conscience* it self, *viz.* the *Word of God*, should be our Guide.

*Ans.* This wou'd be just-Arguing, if it did not imply an *Impossibility*. The *Word of God* is our *Rule of Conscience*; and all Men; no question, who know it to be the *Word of God*, are ready to submit their *Judgments* to it. But then he who lies under an *erroneous Conscience*, either *knows* the Will of God, or doth *not*: If he *knows* it, how is he *erroneous*? If he doth *not* know it, it is impossible for that to be his *Guide* or *Rule*.



You'll say, A Man ought, in such Circumstances, to *suspend* his Actions, that is, A Man may *suspend*, when his *Conscience* tells him that he may *lawfully, justly, and safely* do an Action; which is but little different from a Contradiction.

But what must a Man do in such unhappy *Circumstances*, when the *Laws* of God are contrary to one's *Conscience*?

This can be no Question, where the *Laws* of God are *known* and *understood*; for 'tis impossible for any honest Man not to guide himself by that Rule, when he knows that God has determined the Point. But when a Man breaks the *Laws* of God, *not known* or *understood*, by following his erroneous *Conscience*, I can't but think him free from Guilt, before God; whereas were he literally to keep the *Laws* of God, but yet act against his *Conscience*, he wou'd be guilty of a great Crime. This perhaps may seem a Paradox; but yet if one may determine between two Sins, which is the *worst*, one may by the same Rules determine this Matter. As,

First, That *Crime* is the *worst* which is committed with the *basest, most villianous, and most dishonest Mind and Intention*: But he that acts with an *erring Conscience* against the *unknown* or *not understood* Will of God, acts with the most *sincere* and *honest Mind*; therefore to follow one's *Conscience* in such Cases, even *against* the Will of God, supposing it to be Criminal, which it is not, is the *lesser* Crime. 2dly, The *Evil* of any Action is not to be judged of from the *Fact* it self, but from the *Circumstances* attending it. Every *Killing* of a Man is not *Murder*; nor is every *Falshood* a *Lye*; nor is every sort of *taking away* another Man's Goods *Theft* and *Robbery*. If *Killing* a Man, considered only as to the *Fact*, was *Malum per se*, then 'twas absolutely impossible that God should ever have commanded *Abraham* to slay his Son *Isaac*; because God would have commanded the Performance of an Act absolutely inconsistent with his Goodness; which would be a Contradiction.

tradition. We find too, that God himself *excused* even the Killing of a Man, if it were done thro' Ignorance: *But the Soul that doth ought presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord, and that Soul shall be cut off from amongst his People*, Numb. 15. 30. 'Tis then *Murder*, when *knowingly* and *designedly*, not by Law, we take away the Life of a Man: 'Tis *Theft* when we design the depriving another of what is his own, and illegally execute our Designs; and so of other Sins. Facts therefore done thro' *perfect Error* and *Ignorance*, being always look'd upon as free from Crime; whereas such as are done with Design, are look'd upon as Criminal: 'tis evident, that Conscience is to be followed; and he is guilty of the least Crimes, who recedes the least from that. Lastly, The Man that acts *against* his Conscience, offends against God, more than he that *ignorantly* breaks the Laws of God; because whoever owns the Being of a God, cannot but believe his Judgment and Conscience acceptable to God: If he did not, without doubt he would change it for what he thought was acceptable to him. Now he that acts against his Conscience, must *knowingly* and *wittingly* do what he thinks *displeasing* to God: So 'tis plain that this must be *more Criminal*, than to do a thing displeasing to God *ignorantly* and *accidentally*, as much as it is more a Fault to do a thing *presumptuously* than not. And this is the Reason which God himself, in the *Mosaic Law*, assigns for the Difference between Sinners that sin *ignorantly*, and such as *sin with an high hand*; *Because* (speaking of the presumptuous one) *he hath despis'd the Word of the Lord, and hath broken his Commandments*, Numb. 15. 31.

Will an *erroneous Conscience* therefore excuse all Faults? Or will he that follows that be free from the Imputation of Sin? Will *Error*, like *Charity*, *cover the multitude of Sins*? Or in what consists the Crime of Erroneous Persons?

The Crime, I think, consists in the *Negligence* of such as are betrayed into Error. Which *Negligence* is more or less *punishable*, as the Will of God has been plainer or

or more obscurely discoverable by Men. *Punishable*, I say, but not by *Man*, unless the Errors betray them into such Acts as are inconsistent with the *Civil Interests* of Mankind. For since the Fault lies only in Negligence, what Man alive can tell what Industry, Pains, or Labour has been used to attain the Truth? God, the *Searcher of Hearts* can easily discover this; and therefore we are assured, *Rom. 1. 20.* that *the Gentiles* are without excuse, for their Follies and Sins in Idolatry, *because that which may be known of God is manifest in or to them, —for the invisible things of him from the Creation of the World are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his Eternal Power and Godhead: So that they are without Excuse.*

But then if the Fault of Negligence be removed, if *Diligence* and *Industry* be applied, and yet the Error be unsurmountable, 'tis plain the Error is *Involuntary*, 'tis necessary, because *out of our Power* to remove it; and therefore the Persons under Mistake are as *free from Crime*, or the *Imputation* of it, as *Innocent* or *Orthodox* Persons are; and I see not how God could either be *Good* or *Just*, if he laid it to their Charge. Where-ever there is *Crime* there must be *Will*, in Sins of *Commission*; or *Negligence*, in Sins of *Omission*. He that follows an *erroneous Conscience*, may be guilty of the one or the other: But if he has neither *Negligence* and *Ignorance* affected, nor *Wilfulness*, he cannot have any *Crime*.

'Tis time now to look back, and to view the Ground we stand upon. 'Tis evident, I believe, that *simple Errors* are not Punishable, let them spring from what Source they will. 2dly, That *Errors* in purely *Speculative* Matters are not Punishable. Nor, 3dly, Such Errors as have only *accidental Connexions* with Practice. Nor, 4thly, Such Errors as have a *necessary Connexion*, but yet the Connexion is not seen or own'd. The only punishable Errors are such as are *voluntary*, or proceed from *Negligence*. Lastly, It has been prov'd, that an *er-*

*erroneous Conscience* obliges us to follow its Dictates, and that 'tis a *lesser Crime* to break the Laws of God *ignorantly*, than to act against one's Conscience.

Let me now a little touch those *Theological Scarecrows*, as they are commonly used, and as Mr Hales, in his unanswerable Tract of *Schism*, calls them, *Heresy* and *Schism*. From what has been said, it follows, that *that Heresy* cannot be damnable, which consists in pure *speculative Matters*; nor such as consists in *simple Errors*; nor such as consists in Points which have only accidental or necessary Connexion, not seen or owned with Practice; because in all these Cases *Error* is not *punishable*. It cannot be Criminal, unless it proceeds from *Negligence* in searching after the Will of God, and enquiring into his Laws, or else from *Witfulness*. For if a great deal of Pains and Care has been used to know the Mind of God, and yet we cannot attain it, 'tis not our *fault*, and consequently we cannot be chargeable. "For if God (says Mr. Chillingworth) would have had his "Meaning in these places certainly known, how could it "stand with his Wisdom to be so wanting to his own "Will and End as to speak obscurely? Or, How can it "consist with his Justice, to require of Men to know certainly the Meaning of those Words, which he himself "bath not revealed? Suppose there were an absolute "Monarch, that in his own Absence from one of his Kingdoms, had written Laws for the Government of it, "some very plainly, and some very ambiguously and "obscurely, and his Subjects should keep those that were "plainly written with all Exactness; and for those that "were obscure, use their best Diligence to find his "Meaning in them, and obey them according to the Sense "of them which they conceive; should this King, either "with Justice or Wisdom, be offended with these Subjects, if by reason of the Obscurity of them, they "mistook the Sense of them, and fail of Performance, "by reason of their Error? cap. 2. § 127.

To make therefore *Heresy punishable*, it must first be proved *Criminal*; and to do that, it must be proved *Voluntary*,

*Voluntary*, or to proceed from *Negligence*. And then the Definition of it must be, not (as 'tis usually put) for an *Error in Fundamentals*, but something else. However, when once Men are agreed upon what are *Fundamentals*, and lay aside *Human Deductions*, as certainly *Non-Fundamentals*; sure it is, that a great many Notions to serve a Party, frequently call'd *Heresies*, will be blotted out of the Catalogue. A *Heretick* that is *Punishable*, is one that professes *Doctrines* which he knows to be false, in order to lead Men into *Practices* which he knows to be wicked. God and Man may punish such, consistent with *Goodness*, *Justice*, and *Mercy*; and every Man is obliged to follow the *Apostle's* Rules concerning *Hereticks*, Tit. 3. 10, 11. A Man that is an *Heretick*, after the first and second *Admonition*, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted and sinneth, being condemned of himself. For surely such an *Heretick* as is before mentioned, who will presume to teach such *Doctrines* and such *Practices*, has all the Characters which the *Apostle* gives; he is subverted, he sins, he is self-condemned: But that which generally bears the Name of *Heresy*, viz. an *Error in some Speculations about the blessed Trinity*, or such *Mysteries of Christianity*, will hardly be found to have above one of the three Characters the *Apostle* gives of an *Heretick*. If he be subverted, yet 'twill be hard to prove *Sin* or *Self-condemnation* upon a Man. In short, *Heresy* is not an *Error of the Understanding*, but of the *Will*. If *Errors of the Understanding* are *Criminal*, let All be so, and punish *Philosophical* ones as well as *Theological*, and take into the Account all others too, and let him that is without *Sin among you cast the first Stone*. If this seems shocking, give but a good Reason why *Theological Errors of the Understanding* alone must be sinful and liable to Punishments, and I'll venture to promise to prove others to be under the same Predicament. If you say that *Heresy* is an *Error of the Will*, then tell me why the Man that impartially studies the Scriptures, and differs in his Notions from the received *Hypotheses* in some *mysterious speculative* Matters,

Matters, is branded with the ignominious Character of *Heretick*? 'Tis surprizing therefore, that a professed Opinion, accompany'd with Charity and Good-nature, should become more Criminal in some Mens Minds, than even a Wicked Life. If it were in my Choice to appear before the Great Searcher of Hearts in what manner I would; except it be that of Innocence, or sincere Repentance, I would rather appear with a thousand Errors, and what some call *Heresies*, about me, if they were such as proceeded from real Judgment, after all my Industry to search out Truth, and to know the Will of God, than to appear as one who has been ever *Drunk*, *Profane*, or has ever led an immoral Life. And yet how lightly are these pass'd over, and an *innocent erroneous* Person, or perhaps but *suspected* of Error, how terribly is he hamper'd, persecuted, and worried? "Anciently, (says Mr. *Hales*, in his Sermon upon Rom. 14. 1.) "*Heretical and Orthodox Christians, many times even in Publick holy Exercise, conversed together without Offence. It is noted in the Ecclesiastick Stories, that the Arians and Right Believers so communicated together in holy Prayers, that you could not distinguish them 'till they came to the Δοξολογία, the Gloria Patri, which the Arians used with some difference from other Christians. But those were Times, quorum lectionem habemus, virtutem non habemus: We read of them in our Books, but we have lost the Practice of their Patience. — And presently afterwards, SEVERITY against, and SEPARATION from Heretical Companies, took its Beginning from the Hereticks themselves.*" Whence is it that *Orthodox* Persons are so ready to follow the evil Example of *Hereticks*, and what is more, the very *worst part* of their Example? Whence is it that they so readily embrace the Means which were invented by *erroneous* Persons to carry on a wrong Cause? Or, if we will consult Experience, that will tell us, that since the Time when Force and Temporal Punishments were first used to propagate Notions, it has been *ten times*, I might say *ten thousand times*,

times, used to propagate *Errors*, instead of *once* to propagate *Truth*.

As to *Schism*, I shall only add, That from what has been said, nothing can be inferr'd that will encourage it. I refer you to Mr. *Hales's* incomparable Tract upon that Subject. If any *Dissenter* thinks to justify himself from what has been said, or upon the Principles laid down in that Treatise, there will not not be wanting who will defend Mr. *Hales*, and who will prove the *Unreasonableness* of *Separation* from the *Church of England*, very consistently with the Principles here laid down.

If you, *Sir*, should think fit to make a publick Reply to what is here offer'd, I know you are too much a Gentleman to carp at *Words*, or let go my *Meaning*; you have too much *Sense* to embrace a *Shadow* instead of the *Substance*. I perswade my self that you will believe me, when I assure you, that I love a *Truth* for *Truth's* sake, and am overjoy'd when I find it, though it makes against me. I only allot to *Truth* the first Place in my Heart: Next to that, you have the pre-eminence in,

S I R,

Decemb. 11.

1714.

Your most Obedient Servant.



(37/90









